●273 Nowadays the Coptic priests prepare wine for the eucharist in great secrecy, locked up in the beyta-lehem", the storehouse of the church, but it is believed that they use raisins purchased from Arab traders.

b. Animal Husbandry

233 The raising of livestock among the Amhara is not directly related to available pasture. The two factors that stand out are the importance of cattle for prestige and expression of wealth; the interrelatedness of livestock with the agricultural ecology and land use.

In the rainy season the valleys are usually waterlogged, and armed peasants take the cattle to the "dega" upland for several weeks of grazing. Obversely, in the dry season when the uplands and hilltops are parched, the cattle is taken to the valley to graze in and alongside riverbeds. Pasturage, "sed", is free--by agreement, usually within the "bota", somewhat vague territorial area belonging to the local church, feudal lord, etc. During the rainy season, the trek upland assumes semi-nomadic proportions at times, ("zallan"), for the peasants may take their wives, bigger children, and households along. Generally, if the fields are very fertile, the pasturage will be more distant from the hamlets. The dry season sometimes causes such severe drought that after the cattle has eaten the stubble off the harvested fields, the growth of calves comes to a temporary stop, there is no mating, and milk is reduced even to cessation. Fortunately

23 and form a new one. If he re-uses an old basket, he first sweeps out the larvae (eggh) remnants, wax, etc., with the "nebasel" plant which the bees are said to like.

Sometimes as rapidly as six weeks later, the honey is ready for collecting. The hive is smoked out, and many bees perish. Some of the honey is retained at home and mixed with water to make non-alcoholic "berz" when honored [272] guests come. The wax, to which some of the honey still adheres, is rolled over strong cotton or fiber thread and the [373] resulting long thin candle is used in church to illuminate the readings and the processions.

Most of the honey is sold on the big "Saturday market", or directly to the woman in the nearest town who operates a "tedj byet", a mead house. To make it worth his while, a farmer should have at least five skeps-hives, from which he can realize 50 kilos of honey annually, for which he can obtain about $20. A very big keeper may have as many as 50 skeps, bringing him U.S. $200. for the honey. [273] But the real profit is made by the woman owner of the tedj byet, who pays little for this honey, for gesho (fermenting agent) and for a big barrel to brew mead in, and then, after some months, sells her product, "tedj", a wine-like alcoholic drink, at a price that only noblemen, clerks, town officials, and Muslim traders can afford.

[278] The honey of the wild bee, "terb", is used against trachoma and other eye diseases. But "ghame" forbids the eating of such wild honey.

Civet cat has been "farmed" by some in certain districts for centuries, and the musk taken regularly from the

are raised in the housewife's kitchen garden. Every husband of pride claims to be able to distinguish the wot of his wife. Among spices used are:

Ethiopian spices, raised by Amhara:

"Tena Adam" (lit. health of Adam), very aromatic. Important medicine against buda spirit (evil eye).

This is Aue (Ruta graveolens, Ruta hortensis).

Fenugreek (Trigonella Foenumgroccum), called "Abush"

Coriander (Coriandrum sativum), "dembelal". Cheaper than "bärbäre and used to replace it.

Sweet Basil (Ocinum Basilicum), called "bäsobela" or "zäqa qebye"

Bärbäre, the all-important red peppery major garden crop.

Ginger, called "zendjebel". It is used unscraped.

Caraway seed (Carum carvi) called "enselal", also used to make "araqi" intoxicant drink.

"Abusda", a dark seed resembling nug. Also called "tequr azmud".

Mustard seed, called "shenfa", ground to condiment.

Thyme, called "azmud", in light and dark varieties.

Wild Thyme, "tosen".

Garlic, called "näch shenkurt" (lit. white onion).

Spices used by Amhara, but bought on market, including those of Yemen importation:

Cardamon, called "korärima". (Elettaria paradise).

Saffron (Crocus sativus), called "erd", used to add golden orange color to reddish "wot".

Cumin (Cuminium cyniaum), called "kamun".

252 Butter is made in a large gourd ("gurna"), plugged with a wooden prop. The housewife shakes this back and forth, much like Middle Eastern nomads shake it in skins. The butter that results resembles Indian ghee, and is called, at this stage, "gorännä". For human consumption it is then usually boiled with spices, especially bärbärey, but not with salt. To cure it further in order to make it sweet, delay rancidity, etc., butter (qebyë) is further boiled with one or several of the following spices in the process known as "yäqebyë mantäriya", "yäqebyë anäṭaṭär":

263

bark of ginger	- quaräfa zenjebel
cardamon seeds	- korärima
thyme	- azmud
garlic	- näch shenkurt
sweet basil	- bäsobela
saffron	- erd
wild thyme	- ṭosen

302 Since most of these spices are expensive, butter intended for ornamental pomade of women's hair is boiled instead with leaves of the "ades" bush, which grows wild. This process is "ades qernefad".

273 The most important, daily drink is tälla, the barley beer brewed by the housewife. It is little different, basically, from other African barley beers. Men almost never drink water (though the barley beer may be very weak), partly due to their fondness for "sweet", i.e. only slightly fermented beer. After three days of storage, the Amhara begin to complain that it is "too bitter", and let the women drink it up.

●273 The preparation proceeds in steps at long intervals (up to a year), but the final stage takes 1-2 days only, to prevent "bitter" taste. There is nearly as much discussion over which woman brews the best talla as of who makes the best wot, though the opportunity for individual recipes is much more limited.

In most cases, the fermenting agent is "gesho" (Ziziphus mitis), the leaf of a bush that is semi-domesticated, grown inside or near the hamlet. The shiny green leaves are dried. Then the housewife washes the big beer jars, dries them, fumigates them with olive wood for at least 15 minutes. She prepares the malt, "beqqel", by fermenting barley in water for 3 days, while in another jar she mixes sorghum varieties, dagussa, or zengada (Eleusina multiforma) with water, and lets it also ferment for 3 days. Then she dries and bakes the malt into bricklike consistency, and stores this "abshello" on the horizontal rafters of the hut, ready for quick use.

When consumption time nears, she breaks up some bricks of abshello into another freshly fumigated jar, adds gesho and some fresh "beqqel", and wets the mixture slightly. After 3 days it is ready for use. The morning of each day she takes some of it, places it in a big pot, and fills it with water taken from the river. After 6 hours of settling, the beer is ready for consumption. Leftovers (e.g. from feasts) begin to carbonize a bit after 3 days, and, just when the European begins to enjoy the slightly alcoholic drink, the Amhara declares it "bitter" and unfit.

Variations include: The use of other grains, even

273 wheat, in place of barley, after roasting, grinding and baking. "ïtta" leftovers may be used in place of abshello. A rich man may add honey at the final stage to increase the sweetness of the "tälla". To increase alcoholic content, mashella can be added. But for the average peasant it is more important to find ways of stretching the daily beer by watering it down, resulting in "asser weha", or "qerrara". A poor man who has no gesho plants and cannot afford to buy the leaves at the market, can gather leaves of the "qächamo" or "gerawa" plants which grow wild; also the root and bark of "täjo" (Rhamnus straddo), but this is of low prestige. Interestingly enough, Muslim neighbors who are religiously forbidden alcohol, dispense with gesho or other hops, and brew a light drink in similar fashion, called "bebun" or "qärbäbbo".

Much more alcoholic is mead made from fermented honey, "täj" (which may possibly derive its name from the [554] wild hops). It is the drink of prestige, regularly consumed only by feudal lords, and available to peasants only for feasts. [415] While barley beer is drunk from a cow's horn, mead is imbibed from a widespread, imported "berelle", a small, long-necked, decanter-shaped glass bottle which first entered this area in the last century containing Turkish perfume, traded by Arabs for the ladies of "great men". It has practical advantages: the small opening lets wax and dead bees float to the surface where a flick of the thumb can remove them; and it is much harder for the ever-present flies to enter the bottle, especially since the tip of the thumb can seal it.

273 [272] Since fermenting mead is too specialized for the ordinary housewife and it must usually be bought, the peasant consumes his honey-drink more often as "berz", unfermented honey water, and this is what he offers an honored guest, in addition to barley beer. If the peasant consumes mead, he usually does it away from home, at the nearest big market or town where he has gone to sell his products. For two liters of mead he has to pay as much as he receives for an entire kilo of honey (ETH$1.- or US$0.40). He cannot usually afford more and leaves after one bottle.

In the fermentation of mead, "gēsho" or other hops mentioned are used. Six or seven parts of water to one part of honey, plus gesho, are stirred in a huge barrel or large imported tin can. This permits the tapping of the finished product at the bottom, as a jar would not. The first, lightly fermented mead is called "bätäha". Mead fermented several months to a year, more expensive and of higher prestige is "däräq" (lit. dry), a strong intoxicant.

272 Coffee is served black, after roasting, crushing and boiling in front of an honored guest. Salt may be added, African style, but never sugar (which, however, is added to imported tea drunk in towns). Milk is never added, but sometimes butter, even spiced butter. Coffee may grow wild, or may be purchased at the market: longberry from Harar, or from Jimma.

576 A significant culture trait is connected with the serving of any drink. The servant who pours, or the host himself in case of an honored guest, pours a small mouthful into his own cupped hand and drinks it publicly. This

524 pebble, thus becoming "owner" of position A6.

Now it is the turn of player A, who can begin anywhere he likes, palming one of his own pebbles, and proceeding as above until he conquers one opponent's position, alway proceeding counterclockwise. There are many variations to this basic procedure. E.g. it is possible to become "partial owner" of a position, in which case the dispute is settled by chance, e.g. by hiding a pebble in one hand and letting the other guess which hand hides it. The player who wins all the grooves wins the game. The loser is called "ayt bälla" (lit. the rat ate him).

This game is regarded as harmless, unless a person becomes so addicted to it that he wastes all his time at it.

273 517 Entertainment of adults, especially in the towns, often involves considerable consumption of barley beer, fermented honeymead, and even "araqi". The proverb interprets stages of behavior, in drinking, as follows:

"First cup : Rat", (When one drinks eagerly, like a rodent);

"Second cup : Bee", (When there is buzzing among pleasantly agitated drinkers);

"Third cup : Monkey", (Grimacing, laughing foolishly, sweeping arms);

"Fourth cup : Dog", (When drunkards howl, without control, or depressed).

275 487 There are three types of public facilities for relaxation, found in the market-towns; The teahouse, the beer-house, and the mead-house, all of which are sharply differentiated:

The teahouse ("shäy bét") is fully respectable; it is for men only, no women are supposed to enter it, and even the waiters are male. It is patronized by traders, clerks, minor officials (for high officials and nobles would not want to be seen consuming food or drink in public), police detectives, etc. Talk is largely of business matters and events of the day. The tea is consumed with a great deal of sugar dissolved in it, and a sweet condiment called "fûl", probably of Arab introduction,

275 548 Even a prostitute would be ashamed to engage in one-night affairs, to engage in sexual activities coldly without at least some minimal affect. She is paid for her services after consumption, or tries to take the man's money while he is asleep, but will not aggressively demand advance payment. Therefore, customers who may develop an interest in the same waitress-prostitute, not rarely fight for her affection, temporary though it is. No prostitute would take more than one man in one night, not only because this would be very shameful, but also her competitors would beat her for such unethical behavior. In the past the "täj bʏet" was publicly advertised by a red cross painted on the outside wall. During the Italian occupation, protests of the International Red Cross caused removal of this sign, but one still encounters it in remoter areas.

●273 [77] The use of an even stronger drink, "äräqi" (arrak), the only distilled drink among traditional beverages, is very likely of Arab introduction; It is on the increase in towns because of exposure to strong European liquor during the Italian occupation, but is not made or consumed in the rural hamlets, not even on feasts. In the towns it is made, usually to fill specific orders, by the wives of soldiers or policemen, to add to the meager income of the husbands, whose salary of Eth$20 - 25 is lower than that of the unskilled laborer (Eth$30 - per month). It is produced from "enselal" caraway seeds, gesho (leaf f fermentation), semi-fermented barley ("beccel") and dagussa grain, of which are crushed, mixed with water, dagussa plant is added, and the fermented mixture is boiled for 10 hours, distilled through a bamboo reed. The finished product is carried, in a European glass bottle, to the customer directly, e.g. the owner of the "täj bʏet", and is consumed, because of the higher price, by semi-educated clerks and officials with good salaries, or travelling traders or army or

273 police officers. The visiting peasants, who have just sold the harvest, stick to mead, which, for their taste, is alcoholic enough and expensive enough.

The person who pays for a round of drinks is loudly lauded as "elephant", king of African animals. The "tāj byēt" is usually the gayest place in town, well-lit, open until very late at night, equipped with nimble waitresses who, contrary to the usual pattern of female behavior, lightly flirt with the customers, in a semi-childish (therefore subordinate) way.

273 177 In recent years, exposure to European alcoholic beverages in the cities had led to attempts to replace thehoney used in "taj" with cheaper sugar, and to add other ingredients to raise the alcoholic content. This is done in many mead-houses in Addis Ababa, but is rejected by the traditional conoisseur, especially in provincial towns like Gondar. Even in the city this is regarded as dangerous, for no one knows just what the experimenter may have added. One common police case is the adding of gasoline to city barley-beer or mead, which competitors sometimes have placed into the competitor's brew so as to ruin her business. An early effect of the exposure to European alcoholic beverages was reported humorously in the 1920's, when the private brewer of the powerful provincial lord Ras Hailu of Gojjam attempted to champagnize the traditional mead (footnote 99).

276 Consumption of tobacco ("tembaho"), which is called "drinking tobacco" if smoked, is still regarded as forbidden by the Abyssinian Coptic clergy, and is therefore rare among Amhara, except for those modern-educated individuals who have been abroad. The latter smoke cigarettes turned out by Ethiopian government monopoly in Addis Ababa.

Footnote 99 - Griaule, M.: D'un Mode Aberrant de Conservation de l'hydromel au Godjam. Journal de la Societe des Africanistes, IV, Fasc 2, pp. 278-284, Paris, 1934.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

CAP. XII.—*Where and how the bread of the Sacrament is made, and of a Procession they made, and of the pomp with which the mass is said, and of entering into the church.*

782 252 [346] The making of this sacramental bread is in this manner. The building in which it is made, in all churches and monasteries, is, as I said above, on the gospel side, outside of the church and its circuit, which is like a cloister, in the space contained by the other outer circuit, which is not covered in, which space serves for a churchyard. All the churches and monasteries have such a building, and it does not contain anything else except what is requisite for this purpose; that is to say, a mortar for pounding wheat, a machine for making very clean flour, and such as is required for such a purpose, for they do not prepare this sacrament from flour or wheat on which women have laid their hands. They have pots for preparing the paste, which they make thicker than ours. They have a furnace, as for distilling water, and upon it a plate of iron, and in some churches of copper, and in other poor churches of clay. This plate is round and of a good size; they place fire underneath it, and when it is hot clean it with a waxed cloth, pour on it a portion of paste, and spread it out with a wooden spoon of such size as they intend to make the bread, and they make it very round. When it is set they take it off and place it on end, then they make another in the same way. When this second one is set, they take the first and place it upon it, that is to say, the side of the first which was uppermost they put upon the top of the other, fresh with fresh, and so the bread remains one whole one, and they do nothing more than make it round and turn it from one side to the other, and move it about on the plate, that it may bake on both sides and on the circumference. In this manner they make one or as many as they wish. In this same

[273] house are the raisins from which the wine is made, and a machine for pressing.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

In this country there are in some parts very flat lands, and in others mountainous; and altogether they are fruitful lands. There are no snowy ranges, but withal severe frosts, especially in the flat lands. In all the lands there is great breeding of cattle. [231]

He says that he did not see the river Nile, and he reached to two days' journey from it, and the days' journey which they went were small ones, namely, four or five leagues, a little more or less. But some of those in his company reached its source, and they say that it rises in the Kingdom of Gojame, and its source is in great lakes, and where it rises there are islands, and thence it commences its course and goes to Egypt.

The time when the Nile rises in Egypt is (as they say) from the 15th day of September and later, and in all October; and the reason of this is, because the winter of Ethiopia begins from the middle of June to the middle of September, and on account of the great rains which take place in it without this winter ever changing, the Nile overflows in Egypt at that time.

It is the general custom of Prester John and all the people for no man on horseback to pass a church, but before they reach it they dismount, and so pass it, and lead their beasts by the bridles, and after passing they mount.

When Prester John and all his people travel, the altar and the altar stone on which mass is said, all goes on the shoulders of the priests as on a litter, and there go eight priests with each altar by turns, that is, four and four: and a priest goes in front of them with a thurible, and further in front a zagonay ringing a bell, and all the people go away from the road, and those that are on horses dismount, and show reverence to the altar stone or altar.

There is no grape wine there, more than in two houses, where it is made publicly, namely, in the house of Prester John and the house of the Patriarch Abima Marcos; and if

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

273 any other is made, it is secretly. The wine with which mass is said in all the churches and monasteries is made in this manner. They take raisins which they have stored in the sacristies and they put them to soak in water for ten days, and they swell, and they let them dry, and they crush them and press them in a cloth, and with that wine which comes out they say mass.[1]

231 The horses, natives of the country of Prester John, are many and not good, for they are like Gallician beasts; those which come from Arabia are very good, like Moorish horses; those from Egypt are much better, very tall and big and handsome. Many lords breed horses from the mares they get from Egypt in their stables. In this manner, namely, when they are born, they do not suck the mother more than three days, and they at once put the mares to the horses[2]; and they tie up the little colts somewhat apart from the mothers, and they keep for them many milch cows, and give them their milk to drink.

DEO GRATIAS.

[1] The Malabar Christians had the same custom. See Duarte Barbosa.
[2] *As mais acaralanas logo.*

[pp. 413-416 have not been processed for the files. - Analyst]

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

The Abyssinians receive the holy sacrament in both kinds, in unleavened bread, and in the grape bruised with the husk together as it grows, so that it is a kind of marmalade, and is given in a flat spoon. Whatever they may pretend, some mixture seems necessary to keep it from fermentation in the state that it is in, unless the dried cluster is fresh bruised just before it is used; for it is little more fluid than the common marmalade of confectioners; but it is perfectly the grape as it grew, bruised stones and skin together. Some means, however, have been used, as I suppose, to prevent fermentation, and make it keep; and though this is constantly denied, I have often thought I tasted with a flavour that was not natural to the grape itself.

It is a mistake that there is no wine in Abyssinia; for a quantity of excellent strong wine is made at Dreeda, south-west from Gondar about thirty miles, which would more than supply the quantity necessary for the celebration of the eucharist in all Abyssinia twenty times over. The people themselves are not fond of wine, and plant the vine in one place only; and in this they have been imitated by the Egyptians, their colony; but a small black grape, of an excellent flavour, grows plentifully wild in every wood in Tigre.

Large pieces of bread are given to the communicants, in proportion to their quality; and I have seen great men, who, though they open their mouths as wide as conveniently a man can do, yet from the respect the priest bore him, such a portion of the loaf was put into his mouth, that water ran from his eyes, from the incapacity of chewing it; which, however, he does as indecently, and with full as much noise, as he eats at table.

After receiving the sacrament of the eucharist in

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

four cuba for a pataka, each cuba about two rotol, or somewhat less. Butter, 20 rotol, for 1½ pataka, and 3½ harf. Civet, 1¼ pataka the wakea. Wax, 4 patt. the faranzola. Elephants teeth, 35 rotol for 18 patt. Water, 1½ paras the smallest jar, and 3 paras the largest. Abyssinian gold dust, 15 patt. per wakea, at Mocha. Dora, 12 measures for a pataka. The Venetian sequin goes for 2¼ patakas. 435 804

The Abyssinian grain measure is the ardeb, which, at Gondar, contains 10 measures, called Madega, each equal to 12 ounces, Cairo weight. An ardeb of grain costs 2 derims, or 2 patakas; an ardeb of teff, the same; 6 or 8 ardeb of tocusso pay an ounce (wakea) of gold, or 10 derims.

Servants Wages at Gondar *. At Gondar a maid-servant receives 15 salts per annum, and is fed in the house. A man-servant is paid 4 pataka yearly, which correspond to four wakea, or ounces of gold, Abyssinian weight, and receives besides two loaves, or cakes of teff, for his support daily. If his master is good, he sometimes gives him a little flesh, lentils, or vetches. He is not obliged to clothe him, but he sometimes gives him a pair of trowsers, which consist of about one-fourth of a yard of white cloth. 465 357

With respect to carriage, &c. three bundles of wood, which are brought from Tchagassa, three hours walking, cost a salt. The carriage of a jar, or manteca, full of wine, or honey, from Emfras, eight hours journey, pays a salt, of the weight of 3 faranzala, or so. 435 482

Thirty-three teff bread cost a salt; the loaves are about 3 lines thick, and 18 inches diameter. A pair of shoes (pantufle) cost a salt. 8¼ peeks of cloth is the least gift that can be offered in the country. 435

Bouza. Manner in which the Abyssinians make a kind of beer, that, in their language, is called bouza. 273

To make this, they use tocusso simply; but sometimes they mix it with grain (wheat), or dora, or all three together; but in ordinary tocusso is best. A jar of tocusso, or of the three sorts of grain, contains as much as is sufficient to make two loaves, that are a tenth part of the whole jar; besides which, they use about half a rotol of Ghesh leaves.

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* From this, to the 29th line of page 68, is a translation from the Italian of L. Balugani.

[p. 47]

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

●273 The first part of the process is to grind the tocusso, after which they take a fourth part of it, and knead it with water and leaven, as if to make bread. This they put in a jar to ferment for two days, at the end of which they make a good many thin large cakes, and dry them on the fire till they become as hard as a stone, then break them down into crumbs, and put them in a large vessel full of water, capable of holding six times the volume of the grain; or for one jar of grain, the vessel holds five of water, and one for the quantity of grain. At the same time that they put in the bruised bread, as above-mentioned, into that quantity of water, the other things should be got ready to go in also. The grain ought to be fermented for two days, then dried in the sun, and afterwards ground into meal. The Ghesh leaves are ground likewise. The remainder of the meal, or those three-fourths that were not used to make the bread, must be put into a hollow oven, over a fire, with a small quantity of water, and constantly stirred with a stick, until it become a paste; and when the water is dried up, more is put in, constantly stirring the mass until it become black like a coal. The whole so prepared, the crumbs, the mass, and the leaves, are put together into the large jar, and let alone for a day, after which it is poured off, and preserved in jars well stopped. At the end of seven or eight days this liquor begins to be too strong, and is best when fresh, two or three days old.

584 [581] *Marriage.* Marriage is not considered in Abyssinia as a sacrament, yet the church ordains some rules to be observed, in order that the man and the woman may be faithful towards one another. The ordinary method of marriage among people of condition, and among those who most fear God, is the following: The man, when he resolves to marry a girl, sends some person to her father to ask his daughter in marriage. It seldom happens that she is refused; and when she is granted, the future husband is called into the girl's house, and an oath is taken reciprocally by the parties, that they will maintain due fidelity to one another. Then the father of the bride presents to the bridegroom the fortune that he will give: it consists of a particular sum of gold, some oxen, sheep, or horses, &c. according to the circumstances of the people. Then the bridegroom is obliged to find surety

p. 48

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

276 Moslem one and was accordingly originally condemned by the Church.

273 On the other hand they make up for this privation by a pretty free indulgence in their own home-made hydromel (*tej*), beer (*talla*), and spirits (*araki*), and also in fearsome alcoholic preparations distilled by some of the small Greek traders in Addis.

Tej, their principal drink, is home-made by nearly every family; this is manufactured from honey, which is to be found in great quantities in most parts of Abyssinia, and is fermented by means of an evergreen plant called *guecho* or *geshu*. When well made and matured it is a very pleasant beverage; to the native it is an intoxicant, and during the feast days one meets many who have partaken well but not too wisely of it.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

538 Since Adam your lip did eat of that Tree
539 The Savior my heart has been hung up for thee.
19

In this couplet the wax of Adam's sin and Christ's crucifixion in his behalf has been used as a form in which to pour a love message. A literal translation of the wax of the couplet is:

Because Adam ate of the apple from the Tree of Knowledge
The Savior of the World has been crucified for thee.

To savor the gold of the couplet fully, one must know that the verb meaning "was crucified," *tasaqala*, may also signify "is anxious to be near." So a literal translation of the gold would be:

Because of your [tempting] lips
My heart is anxious to be near thee.

538 19 In other more commonly used figures, the duplexity of the message becomes less explicit. In figures known as *hiber and merimer*, the wax and gold are combined in the same word or phrase instead of being put side by side. These figures thus correspond to the English pun. In verses which employ these figures the wax is often but a contrived and transparent excuse for getting to the real point, which appears only in the pun line. Such verses are [522] highly prized, however, for the Amhara tends to regard the pun as a very 538 high form of humor. Here are two examples of Amharic couplets based on 539 simple puns:
522
19

(1) *Ya-mīn ṭiqem ṭallā ya-mīn ṭiqem ṭajji*
Ṭallāt sishañu bunā adargaw enji.

Of what use is *ṭallā*, of what use is *ṭajji*?*
When seeing an enemy off, serve him coffee.

(2) *Yābbāt eddā la-lījj yebāl nabar dero:*
Bāyāt eddā gubāhu ennē-mā sandero.

In olden times a father's debt was passed down to his son;
But here I have a debt today by grandfather begun.

The pun in the first example lies in the phrase *bunā adargaw* ("serve him coffee"), which by elision becomes *bun adargaw* ("reduce him to ashes"). In the second couplet the pun hinges on the word *bāyat*, which signifies "grandfather" but may also be understood to represent *bāyhuāt* ("because I saw her"). The gold meaning of this couplet is thus: It used to be said that one inherited the debt of one's father, but in my case it was the sight of her that put me into debt.

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[273] * *Ṭallā* is a kind of beer made from barley. *Ṭajj* (pronounced *ṭajji* here for the sake of rhyme) is mead.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Still another invidious distinction of considerable importance in the Amhara outlook is that between the "big man" (*ṭilliq saw*) and the commoner (*terā saw*). "Bigness" may be measured in terms of political power, economic wealth, ecclesiastical status, or any combination thereof. Though the peasant frequently has little affection for the big man, he customarily treats him with the greatest show of deference. No matter how unfamiliar a big man may be or from what part of the country he comes, the Amhara peasant sees him as entitled to unquestioning courtesy and obeisance. Analogous distinctions discriminate between the wealthy (*hābtām*) and the poor (*dehā*), and between the genteel (*çhawā*) and the rude (*bālagē*).

Yet if the Amhara takes a dim view of women, youth, and poor folk, as well as non-Amhara and non-Christians, he suffers from no illusions about homo sapiens at his best—unless they are dark illusions. The generic word for "man" in Amharic, *saw*, is the subject of a number of negative associations and idiomatic uses.[12] At its worst, the word is found in an idiom that signifies the evil eye (*ya-saw ayn*), literally: the "eye of man" (or, more idiomatically, "the eye of others"). At its best, when used to signify a fully formed human being, the word *saw* characteristically appears in the plaintive saying, *Saw yallam* ("there is no human being"); in other words, an individual who fully embodies the concept of humanity does not exist. In general, one may say that the Amhara's view of human nature is dominated by his perception of man's inherent aggressiveness and untrustworthiness.

The Amhara believes that unformed human nature is poor raw material, and that without strict punishmen: throughout childhood a person will grow up to be rude and offensive toward others. As an adult, moreover, he must constantly be kept in check. The rationale commonly given for the extensive schedule of fasting is that man's nature is wicked, and only by weakening himself in this manner will he be turned away from some act of aggression against others.

The Amharic concept of *ṭegābaññā* illustrates this view. *Ṭegābaññā* literally carries the meaning of one who has been sated with food and drink, but is normally taken to mean someone who begins to insult and pick fights with others. In their use of this and related words the Amhara express the belief that aggression is the usual consequence of being sated. Insubordinate behavior on the part of a servant or political appointee is usually explained as a result of his having been too well fed. "When a peasant gets sated he hits with his stick. . . " is the first line of a number of couplets I collected among rural Amhara. The specific effect of drinking alcoholic beverages is believed to release, not Eros, but the aggressive instincts. An Amharic proverb about *ṭellā* states this directly: "One [glass] whets the appetite; two quenches it; three heats one up; four makes one quarrel; five brings fighting; six causes killing." Contrary to the view that world peace depends chiefly on filling

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people everywhere with plenty of food and drink, the Amhara outlook would see in such a condition the prelude to mass civil war.

The Good Life

When asked what is their chief goal in life, Amhara peasants frequently respond with the expression *sarto mablät* ("having worked, to eat"). This response says many things. It reflects their constant preoccupation with the need to eat. It suggests that having enough to feed oneself, one's family, and one's guests is the farthest horizon toward which the peasants normally aspire. It also implies that in order to eat one should work by the sweat of his brow; it praises independence and self-reliance.

In raising their children Amhara peasants consciously strive to prepare them for making a living on their own. It is shameful to be dependent on others. It is worse yet to steal. Parents instill in their children a dread of becoming a thief. To be called *lēbā*, or "thief," is—except when in fun—a terrible insult. Stealing is felt to be somewhat worse than murder. In a survey of forty rural Amhara youths asked to name the six worst actions in the eyes of the local populace, eighty-five per cent mentioned stealing, and often under two or three different names; while only sixty per cent mentioned killing, and this answer was sometimes qualified as "killing without justification" or "killing by means of poison." One peasant commented on this question by observing, "You never kill a man unless he has done something wrong; but stealing, that is the sin."

The concept of *sarto mablät* further implies that work is good. It expresses admiration for the industrious farmer. A majority of our TAT respondents preferred that one among twenty-five cards which showed a peasant hard at work in the fields. Agricultural work is idealized in Abyssinia because it promotes the virtues of independence and honesty. If fate concurs, it may even lead to wealth. And in any case it trains and shows one to be *guabaz*, a hero in man's work, for it is no small feat to toil from dawn till moonlight in the busy seasons or half a day on an empty stomach on fasting days.

Nevertheless, those observers are not wholly wrong who speak, like Griaule, of "the little penchant for work among the people."[18] Status considerations keep the Amhara from making a fetish of work as such. He looks down on the work of artisans because of their association with the evil eye. He avoids when possible unskilled manual labor, for traditionally that has been relegated to slaves or servants from "inferior" tribes. Work for wages is likewise deemed undignified. If one must work for someone else, it should be in the context of a more personal relationship—as a retainer, for example. Women are especially sensitive about this and much prefer to serve a man as his temporary wife than as a salaried housekeeper. Finally, although the peasant aspires "to eat, having worked," he is not wholly impervious to the appeal of the more

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ically established cycle) is the only way to catch malaria. We Ethiopians know better. We know that one can *also* catch malaria from drinking the water in places where the Anopheles breed."[28]

The ambivalence toward Western science represented by this statement and by the persistence of analogous attitudes among many educated Ethiopians undoubtedly brings the individuals in question a degree of security that would be lost were they to abandon the traditional, unscientific belief system *in toto*. Perhaps a more solid sort of security could be derived from a program of education which not only imparts scientific information and attitudes, but also educates people to adapt themselves to the changes which the introduction of science involves.

Taste.—In matters of taste, Ethiopia's modern adolescents range from extreme traditionalism to extreme Westernism, with most of them preferring both traditional and European or American patterns in varying proportions. Of food the students tend to prefer the traditional varieties, most popular of which are *doro wat* and *ǐnjarā*. Among Western foods they are fondest of pastries and Italian *pasta*. On the other hand, they are more inclined toward Western beverages than Ethiopian ones. The most popular Western beverages are, for the secondary students, soft drinks, and for the college students, beer; among Ethiopian drinks they prefer *ṭallā* first and milk second:

With regard to their manner of eating, the students' taste is traditional in that most prefer to eat nowhere but within the home, and to eat with their hands rather than use silverware; but it is Westernized in that most prefer eating at their own individual places rather than all together with others out of a common *ǐnjarā* basket. Opiniôn is most divided on the matter of exchanging *gurshā*, a morsel of food which one places in another's mouth. The slight majority who reject this old custom do so because they find it "noisy," "childish," "unsanitary," or simply "out of fashion"; while those who still enjoy it do so chiefly because it "expresses affection."

On questions of dress it should be noted that traditionally the Amhara have sentimentalized their going barefoot as well as their national costume. But because of the practical advantages of wearing tailored clothes at work and using shoes, and perhaps still more because of their high prestige in the modernizing sector, virtually all of the students prefer the European fashion in these matters. On the other hand, with respect to women's wear and the sort of dress to be worn on holidays, the great majority opt the Ethiopian *shammā*.

In their aesthetic interests the students' taste varies considerably according to the medium. With regard to poetry and music, Ethiopian forms are preferred to Western ones, while Western forms of painting and dance are more popular with them than Ethiopian. Poetry stands as the most appreciated of

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565 The local nobility, on the other hand, were eminences whose lives and repu-
554 tations were bound to a more circumscribed locale. While the non-royal nobility, or *makuānnent* in the stricter sense, performed as high dignitaries at the imperial court and governors of large provinces, the local nobility were district chiefs and judges, or even simply wealthy landowners, who enjoyed considerable deference. Though they might not be known outside of their home regions, these men were, for the mass of the population, the lords of existence. *Ka-Gondar negus / yāgar āmbārās,* "the petty district chief [is obeyed] more than the Gondar king"[19] expresses folk wisdom on the subject. The Amharic terms which designate this class of men are *bālābbāt* and *shum,* terms we shall want to consider more closely below.

565 Despite these distinctions among members of the upper stratum of Abys-
184 sinian society, with respect to their general orientation and style of life they differed only in degree. They created and shared what might be called a "gentry subculture," even though it was not so differentiated from the general culture as was the case in Europe and China. In the present context, it will be meaningful to treat them as a single status group.

565 Special manners and skills were self-consciously taught to children of the
184 *makuānnent,* most of which remain part of the gentry subculture today. An
86 etiquette of instinctual inhibition is taught. Some attention is given, for exam-
[576] ple, to toilet training, which is spontaneous among peasant children. Spitting in public is proscribed. Physical aggression is discouraged in favor of the more subtle forms of satire and patient manipulation of others. A quiet, reserved manner of speaking is stressed, in contrast with the less inhibited and cruder self-expression of the peasantry. Dignity of comportment is expected at all times; a noble should not, for example, express great enthusiasm or surprise
[293] over anything. Sobriety is inculcated as a virtue; alcohol is *la-çhawā lījj mādasetchā / la-bālagē māzabābatchā* ("for the nobleman's son a stimulant, for the commoner an intoxicant"). In short, the gentry subculture stresses the general ideal of bringing a child up to be conspicuously genteel, or *çhawā.*

565 Sons of the nobility have traditionally followed a privileged curriculum.[20]
184 They were given lessons in horseback riding and weaponry at an early age.
868 They were also taught how to swim, an uncommon skill among the Abys-
[871] sinians. Reading would often be taught, for which schooling a man of the church might be brought in as a tutor, or the boy might be sent for a while
[534] to a monastery. He might also learn how to play the *baganā,* the ten-stringed lyre used to accompany certain forms of religious and plaintive secular songs.
[883] Instead of spending his teen-age years at the plow, which was regarded as beneath his dignity, the noble boy would follow his father to court and observe the ways of litigation and the manner of passing judgments; or he might be sent as a page to the court of the king or some great lord.

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The instruction of girls in noble families was not so different from that of peasant girls, though they were spared some of the menial drudgery. The *çhawā* girl would be taught all the household arts, but it was understood that she would be provided with numerous slaves to do the work after marriage. Her own adult chores would be limited to the preparation of *ṭaǰǰ*, the beverage of the nobility, and special dishes for her husband; while the preparation of *ṭallā* and food for guests would be the work of domestics.

The style of life of the nobility is colored above all by a seemingly unlimited command of deference. They are addressed as "my lord" by all comers, and waited on in a hundred ways wherever they go. Every "big man" is attended by a flock of servants and retainers, who accompany him on trips and spare him the slightest exertion. This is so elemental a feature of Amhara culture that big men are commonly referred to with the associative prefix *enna-*; for example, *enna-Dājāzmātch Hailu*, meaning "Dajāzmātch Hailu and his men."

The social space of a nobleman is crowded with the issuing of commands. When he visits the home of another, he orders the servants and young people there just as imperiously as if he were in his own home. The wives of the nobility develop much the same manner, though from a more passive position. They spend a good deal of their time sitting on their beds and issuing orders. This sort of indolent, vegetative existence has produced the obese figure and morose countenance for which some Abyssinian ladies have been noted. On the other hand, from her particular vantage point the noble lady has often played an influential and enlightened part in court and regional politics.

Conspicuous consumption among the *makuānnent* thus takes the form of a surfeit of servants. The household of a nobleman of modest rank might boast, in addition to numerous maidservants who procure and prepare food and drink for the establishment, as many as ten to fifteen male servants. Plowden has left us a description of some of their functions:

> One carries your shield, and whenever you go out he saddles your mule and accompanies you, and in the house he makes himself generally useful about your person; another makes your mead, arranges it, and is also perhaps a gunner, and supplies you with game; another is doorkeeper and order-keeper generally. One or two, older and wiser, are counsellors, and their knowledge of the country, and of customs and tricks, is of the greatest service; another has charge of the corn, watching that the maidservants do not steal, and arranging the allowance of all the rest; others are grass-cutters only, according to the number of your beasts; another is a wood-cutter for firewood, very necessary in a country where they have no coal, and the wilderness is free to all.[21]

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The ultimate model for these constellations of servants and retainers was, of course, the imperial court. The *makuännent* imitated the behavior of the emperor as much as it was within their means, prerogatives, and sense of discretion to do so. Thus, like the emperor, a nobleman never traveled on foot, but on the back of a caparisoned mule; with as many retainers as possible, shouldering spears or rifles, on the run behind him. He enjoyed a number of quasi-royal privileges: the authority to have cattle slaughtered and to have *tajj* prepared in his home; the right to wear a *barnos*, the dark wool cloak of the nobility; the use of an imported parasol, though not of the scarlet color reserved for the emperor, and of the horsehair fly-switch. In general, the Abyssinian noble attempted to behave like a king in his own sphere of influence and to reproduce in his own court that of the emperor. As d'Abbadie noted:

> A lord of even mediocre importance names his seneschal, his provost, his guards, a foreman of domestics, a chief baker, a butler, a squire, and various captains and pages; then he sets up a hierarchy often in ridiculous disproportion to his position; his inferiors do the same, and there is no one down to the well-to-do peasant who does not institute certain offices and analogous grades in his home. The Ethiopians often laugh about it themselves.[22]

A passion for acquiring titles is the obverse of the Abyssinian's penchant for instituting offices and grades. A man's title, *ya-mä'erg sem* ("name of rank"), has been the major indicator of the deference which is due him. Honorific titles and the paraphernalia appropriate to them are perhaps the most sought after possessions in traditional Abyssinia, for they confer inalienable status. Even if fate should deprive a man of all his wealth and power, he would retain his title until death. If he should become a prisoner, he would be given deferential treatment.

The titles of the nobility were, first and foremost, military titles. The *makuännent* were above all an elite of war lords; and in contemporary Amharic the term *makuännent* (singular *makonnen*) is also used to refer to any commissioned military officer. Their principal ranks, in descending order, are:

rās	"head" (of an army)
dajāzmātch	"general of the (king's) gate"
*fitāwrāri**	"general of the vanguard"
qañāzmātch	"general of the right wing"
gerāzmātch	"general of the left wing"
bālāmbārās	"commander of a fort"
bāshā†	"commander of a rifle corps"
shālaqā	"chief of a thousand"

* In former times the *fitāwrāri* ranked below the *gerāzmātch*.

† *Bāshā* is a Turkish loan word, introduced after the Turko-Abyssinian wars.

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and misreading sacred texts in a language they have never understood. They are notorious drinkers, so much so that a modern Ethiopian novelist has one of his characters, a priest, ask: "If one stops drinking, what else is left in this world?"[44]

Nevertheless, the prestige of the priests was unassailable in Amhara culture. Whatever their personal life, they represented the value of ritual sanctity, which made it possible for the Mass to be performed in the local churches. So long as they had been duly ordained and did not break their lawful marriage bond, they were part of a sacred class. Combes and Tamisier remarked upon this in the 1830's:

> Despite all their vices, these priests manage to make themselves respected; when they pass along the roads, the faithful bow deeply to them, and in no matter what gathering they appear, everyone rises and hurries to kiss their hands.[35]

Privileged contact with the sacred symbols of the church—ordination by the sacrosanct *abuna*, exclusive access to the *tābot*, and officiation at the Eucharist—gave the priests an authority that was independent both of political dispensation and of personal accomplishment.

Other groups within the clergy have been highly esteemed for quite different reasons. Those who become monks carry great weight because they embody the virtue of ascetic piety. The *dabtarā*, on the other hand, are respected for their erudition.

Monks usually come from two kinds of background: unwed deacons desiring to spend their lives as monks, and priests whose wives have died. But previous ecclesiastical connection is not necessary for the monastic calling, nor is the ability to read required. The essential qualification is the willingness to renounce the world. The word for becoming a monk (*manakwasa*) means to renounce earthly things. A prospective monk may be of the sort described by one of Walker's informants:

> An old man who has married many wives and divorced them one by one, may say, "Henceforth it suffices me! Let the world remain lost to me! I am to turn my face to God!"[48]

In earlier times the monastic life was sought by men from all walks of life, including lords, soldiers, even emperors, in consequence of some grievous affliction, or perhaps a vow made in time of trouble, or excessive *Weltschmerz*.

Heads of monasteries have the jurisdiction to confer the monastic status. One who desires this status bequeathes his worldly possessions and goes through a ceremony in the church in which his body is declared dead. The symbol of the monastic state is a little cloth skullcap (*askēma*). Once he has become a monk, an Ethiopian is a legal nonentity. This frees him from all

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Amharic proverb, and even the Emperor when visiting a school expects students to remain seated if they are at the dining table when he arrives.

Some indication of the comparative significance of this concern about eating and drinking in the Amhara psyche is afforded by a recent cross-cultural investigation of dreams. Obtained from samples of young male respondents in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the United States, the dreams were evaluated with respect to the presence or absence of themes of "manifest orality": scenes of someone desiring, looking for, or consuming food or drink. The proportion of Ethiopian respondents (mostly Orthodox Amhara from the Gondar area) who revealed manifest orality in their dreams was found to be *64 per cent*. By contrast, the proportion of those in a sample of non-Muslim Nigerians whose dreams showed manifest orality was 38 per cent, and that in the sample of Americans was only 22 per cent.[11]

The Amhara custom of giving *gurshā* plays up the erotic component of eating. *Gurshā* means "mouthful" and, as already noted, refers to a wad of food which one places in another's mouth, usually as a gesture of affection. *Gurshā* are exchanged between husband and wife and among relatives and friends. They are often given to children, especially in families of higher status, and to favored servants and retainers as well. The *gurshā* is of such meaning in Amhara experience that it is referred to in a number of Amharic idioms. First of all it means a present or a tip—literally, *pourmanger*. It also refers to the charge of a gun: the gun is a beloved object, and a *gurshā* is what one places in its mouth. In contemporary usage, it refers to flashlight batteries.

In connection with love and many other subjects, a good deal of the imagery of Amharic verse relates in one way or another to eating and drinking. The following sample of proverbs and couplets may convey some of the flavor of this phenomenon:

Ṭajj• has no specks; a poor man has no friends.

• • •

[Use] proverbs in conversation; [drink] *ṭajj* in a carafe.

• • •

Hand and fly-whisk; mouth and *injarā*† [go together].

• • •

No matter how much one plows, nothing tastes so good as *goman*.‡

• *Ṭajj*, it may be remembered, is the Ethiopian wine made of honey.

† *Injarā* is the staple pancake.

‡ *Goman* is a kind of cabbage plant that requires no plow cultivation.

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261 To make me forget you, this medicine is right:
271 Food and water, sleep and the night.
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• • •

Love and porridge must be taken while hot;
Once cool, those who would taste are a lot.

• • •

The *ǐnjarā* I have, my lass;
I wait for you the *wat*• to pass.†

• • •

Your father and your mother have vowed to keep from meat;
But you, their very daughter, innards do you eat.‡

261 Eating and drinking provide expressive symbolism in social interaction as
264 well as in verse. They form the primary axis of social life among the Amhara.
271 The exchange of *gurshā* is but a specialized form of the general pattern of
155 expressing sociability through feeding and being fed. Camaraderie consists to
57 a large extent of eating from the same *ǐnjarā* basket, and the etymology of
the word for "friend," *bālīnjarā*, is the same as that for the English "com-
[293] panion," someone with whom one shares bread. At any indoor gathering
barley beer is served continuously. The visit of a guest at any time of day
calls for "a little coffee," a euphemism for as much food and drink as the
[176] host can command. In some Amhara areas a special kind of spirit, the *ṭonin*,
is assigned the specific task of punishing persons who infringe the etiquette
of dispensing and receiving food.[12]

594 From this it is but a short step to politics and morals. The production of
155 large banquets is one of the essential arts of government in Abyssinia—
[554] *panem*, if not *circenses*. The stature of a big man depends partly upon the
number of persons who customarily dine at his expense. A man's Christian-
577 ity, moreover, is judged by his generosity in feeding others, a virtue that is
554 eulogized at times by parading his *ǐnjarā* baskets around the field. A truly
594 Christian Amhara is known by the regularity and scale with which he pre-
155 pares memorial feasts for his departed kin, drinks in some religious fraternal
[735] association, and holds an annual feast (*zīker*) in which food is distributed
to the poor.
155 Oral activity is prominent, moreover, not only as a primary source of
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[263] • *Wat* is the sauce in which the *ǐnjarā* is dipped.

† The gold meaning is: "I'll wait for you until the others leave."

‡ "To eat someone's innards" is an idiom meaning: "to make him fall in love." The gold meaning is thus: "You made me love you."